

Understanding Insight and Attending to Experience:
A Dialectical Examination of Two Articles by Frederick E. Crowe

Early in this decade Crowe published two articles, “For a Phenomenology of Rational Consciousness” and “The Puzzle of the Subject as Subject in Lonergan,” in which he advances three philosophical and three historical claims: (1) that we cannot get a direct insight into insight but must settle for an imperfect “insight by proxy”; (2) that we cannot attend to the subject as subject but must settle for an imperfect access to the subject through a proxy; (3) that, because of the ways formulated in theses (1) and (2) in which the data of consciousness escapes intelligent grasp, the reality of the subject and so a part of being may be “heteromorphic” with knowing; (1’) that, after the publication of *Insight*, Lonergan became aware of the problems involved in understanding insight and attending to the subject; (2’) that he found their solutions in the form of insight and attention by proxy; and (3’) that the direction of Lonergan’s thought points toward the possibility that subjectivity is “heteromorphic” with knowing. If these claims are true, then the aim of *Insight* is unattainable, and the core of Lonergan’s metaphysics and subsequent philosophy, transcendental method, must be rejected as the product of fanciful speculation. The gravity of these claims combined with the authority of their source has caused a stir, and I believe it is necessary to set the record straight. I will argue that Crowe’s analyses of insight and subjectivity are radically wrongheaded, and that a review of the documents Crowe cites as well as other *loci classici* and archival material reveals that Lonergan’s thought never underwent the development Crowe claims it did. Finally, I will explain dialectically how Crowe may have arrived at his counterpositional claims in order to render his mistakes more intelligible and to protect against the tendencies present in each of us to repeat them.